

The Center for the Book in the Library of Congress in partnership with Target presents

LETTERS ABOUT LITERATURE

Letters About Literature is a national reading and writing promotion program.

Sponsored in cooperation with Affiliate State Centers for the Book.

participation guidelines

READ. BE INSPIRED. WRITE BACK.

Books have wings. You can't see them, but they are there just the same. On books' wings, readers can soar to new places where they meet intriguing characters and experience exciting adventures. But a book's wings can also help a reader rise above difficult situations – like peer pressure, bullying or prejudice, or to cope with disappointment and loss.

Have you ever felt the power and lift of literature? Has one book – or perhaps one author – inspired you to change your view of yourself or of the world? If so, we encourage you to enter this year's Letters About Literature writing competition. All you have to do is write a personal letter to an author, explaining how his or her work affected you.

LEVELS OF COMPETITION

Letters About Literature welcomes entries from all readers – reluctant as well as enthusiastic readers – on three Levels of Competition. Entrants must be at least 9 years old and fall into one of the following categories:

Level I – Grades 4-6

Level II – Grades 7 & 8

Level III – Grades 9-12

HOW TO ENTER

First, reflect and connect! Select a fiction or nonfiction book, a short story, poem, essay or speech (sorry, no song lyrics) you have read and about which you have strong feelings. Explore those feelings and why you reacted the way you did during or after reading the author's work. Consider one or more of these questions when writing your letter: Did the characters, conflict or setting mirror your life in some way? What strengths or flaws do you share with a character or characters in the book? What did the book show you about your world that you never noticed before? What surprised you about yourself while you were reading this book? Why was this work meaningful to you?

Second, write a personal letter (not a fan letter or a book report!) Express yourself! A letter is less formal than an essay or research paper. Write honestly and in your own voice, as if you were having a conversation with the author. Those are the best letters to read and the most fun to write! Keep in mind these two tips:

- Correspond, don't compliment! Your entry should inform rather than flatter the author.
- Do not summarize the book's plot! The author wrote the book and already knows what happened. What the author doesn't know is how the book affected **you**.

Third, prepare your letter for submission.

- Entries for Level 1 should be no less than 100 words and no more than 400 words*
- Entries for Level 2 should be no less than 300 words and no more than 600 words*
- Entries for Level 3 should be no less than 500 words and no more than 800 words*

*Recommended lengths.

Please refer to the Contest Entry Guidelines in Rules #4 of the Official Rules found at www.loc.gov/letters for complete information on how to prepare your letter.

STATE AND NATIONAL AWARDS

Judges for each participating State Center for the Book will select the top letter in each Level of Competition (see State Level Judging in the Official Rules for more details). State Winners will receive a \$50 Target GiftCardSM and will advance to the National Level Judging.

Judges for The Center for the Book in the Library of Congress will select six (6) National Winners (2 per Level of Competition) and twelve (12) National Honorable Mention Winners (4 per Level of Competition). The National Winners will receive a \$500 Target GiftCard, plus each will win a **\$10,000 LAL Reading Promotion Grant** for their community or school library so that others can experience personal relationships with authors and the stories they tell. Additionally, the National Honorable Mention Winners will each receive a \$100 Target GiftCard and a **\$1,000 LAL Reading Promotion Grant** for the community or school library of their choice. Community or school library selected for the National Winners and National Honorable Mention Winners is at the Sponsor's sole discretion. Refer to the National Level Judging in the Official Rules for more details.

LAL supports national standards for teaching language arts & reading as recommended by the National Council of Teachers of English and the International Reading Association.

STATE AND NATIONAL AWARDS (continued)

All entries will be judged on the following criteria:

- Exposition (the writer's use of language skills, organization and grammar).
- Content (the writer's achievement in addressing the contest theme).
- Writer's Voice (the writer's style and originality of expression).

Each criteria will be scored on a scale of zero (0) to five (5), where five (5) is excellent and zero (0) is not fulfilling the judging criteria.

DEADLINE & CONTACT INFORMATION

Your letter must be postmarked by December 14, 2007, and mailed to:

Letters About Literature

P.O. Box 609

Competition Level (Indicate level 1, 2, or 3)

Dallas, PA 18612

To receive *free* teaching materials via e-mail, including lesson plans, blackline masters, assessment sheets and sample letters, contact the LAL national office at: **lal@epix.net**. You can also download information from the LAL webpage at the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress website: **www.loc.gov/letters**.

SUBMISSION INFORMATION AND ENTRY COUPON

HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR ENTRIES

• **RETURN ADDRESS.** Print your name and complete return address (either home or school) in the upper right corner of the first page of your letter. Letters without a return address and adequate contact information **will be disqualified**.

• **ENTRY COUPON.** Each letter must be accompanied by an entry coupon (below). Staple the coupon to the last page of your letter. Should you win a state or a national prize, your State Center for the Book will contact you using this information, so be sure your coupon is complete and legible!

• **MAILING ENVELOPE.** Entries should be mailed in a flat 9x11" envelope or smaller. Important! Indicate the competition level – either 1, 2 or 3 – on your envelope. Your Entry must be postmarked **December 14, 2007**, (and arrive in the mail no later than **December 21, 2007**). Mail to:

Letters About Literature

Competition Level (Indicate level 1, 2, or 3)

P.O. Box 609

Dallas, PA 18612

• **OWNERSHIP.** All letters become the property of the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress. Please make a copy of your entry as no letters will be returned.

• **NOTIFICATION.** We regret that we cannot contact every participant who enters. However, an accurate E-MAIL ADDRESS will help us keep in contact with you. Please refer

to the **www.loc.gov/letters** website for program updates throughout the year as well as a note regarding our privacy policy! State Centers for the Book will notify state winners on or about 3/19/08. The Center for the Book in the Library of Congress will notify National Winner and National Honorable Mention Winners on or about 4/30/08.

TEACHERS, PLEASE NOTE:

- Please do not assign the same book to an entire class as this misses the spirit of the program – identifying a personal relationship with an author and/or book. Likewise, rather than assigning the same opening paragraph or topic sentences, encourage students to express themselves individually.
- Mail class sets in one flat envelope rather than individual envelopes. Use one envelope for each level.
- Although we cannot acknowledge receipt of letters, we LOVE your cover letters. This will ensure that you are put on the LAL mail list for next year.

NO PURCHASE NECESSARY. A Purchase will not enhance your chances of winning. MANY WILL ENTER, FEW WILL WIN. Open to Legal Residents of the 50 U.S. & D.C. enrolled as a student in grades 4–12 during 2007/2008 school year, 9 years of age or older as of 9/1/07. Contest Starts 9/1/07 and ends 12/14/07. See below for entry information. Void where prohibited. Subject to Official Rules found at **www.loc.gov/letters**.

Letters About Literature 2008 Entry Coupon

• **PLEASE PRINT.** Often our failure to contact you is due to incomplete or illegible information on the entry coupon, especially your teacher's e-mail address!

• **STAPLE COUPON TO THE BACK OF EACH LETTER.** Use one coupon per reader, rather than one coupon for the entire class.

Name: _____ Age: _____ Home Phone (optional): (_____) _____

Grade (circle one grade only): **Level I:** 4 5 6 **Level II:** 7 8 **Level III:** 9 10 11 12

Book/Story Title: _____ Author: _____

Home Address: Street _____ City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Parental Signature (required if submitting as an individual entry): _____

IMPORTANT! If submitting through a school or library, please complete the additional information below:

School/Library: _____

Street _____ City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

School/Library Telephone: (_____) _____ School/Library E-mail: _____

Teacher/Librarian Contact: _____ E-mail: _____